

Photodynamic Therapy

What is Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) ?

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) is a modern, highly effective treatment for various skin conditions including certain types of pre-cancerous lesions and some non-melanoma skin cancers (NMSCs).

PDT is a very different way to treat these lesions compared to conventional approaches such as surgery, or other topical treatments which require daily application of creams for various time-periods.

It takes advantage of the chemical interaction between light and light-activated topical medication, leading to a series of chemical reactions resulting in damage and death of tumour or abnormal cells.

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The treatment

Preparing the lesion

The area will sometimes be treated with the carbon dioxide laser (Co2) first before the PDT. This uses a high energy beam of light causing heat vaporisation of the lesion. This is usually performed after an injection to the area with a local anaesthetic. During this treatment you will be required to wear eye protection.

Application of the cream

Metvix cream will then be applied to the lesion and the surrounding area. A dressing will be applied over the top.

You must not remove this dressing.

The cream should stay on the lesion for 3 hours.

This is important and helps the cream to be absorbed into the abnormal cells. Try not to touch or disturb the dressing during this time.

Activating the cream

After 3 hours, the consultant/clinician will take off the dressing, wash the lesion and manoeuvre a special lamp into position. You will be asked to wear specially designed dark goggles to protect your eyes from the red light.

The red light treatment lasts for approximately 8-10 minutes.

Treatment and Aftercare

Painkillers are not usually required, but patients sometimes notice a burning skin sensation during/after light treatment.

Cooling sprays or a fan can be used to relieve any discomfort felt. If the treatment does become too uncomfortable for you, then the specialist can pause the light treatment for a short while.

Aftercare

After your treatment you should keep the treated area clean and dry for 24-48 hours.

If bleeding occurs after the treatment, put direct pressure on the area for 20 minutes.

It is not necessary to apply greasy creams immediately post-treatment and they should not be applied within the first 24 hours.

Take Paracetamol by mouth immediately post treatment if discomfort or pain is experienced.

Protect the treated skin from sunlight for 2 days.

After 24 hours:

- No dressing or specific skin care is required
- Daily, gentle washing with soap and apply cream provided. Do not use perfumed products.
- The treated area should not be allowed to dry out and ointment should be applied to reduce the risk of scarring.

- After your first treatment, the treatment is normally repeated approximately 1-4 weeks later depending on the lesion.
- You will be reviewed in clinic approximately 3 months after the final treatment.
- Post-treatment and skin care instruction must be followed to prevent any complications. Please contact the clinic with questions or concerns regarding your treatment.

If you are expecting an Outpatient Appointment and do not receive one, please contact your Consultant's secretary.

General Precautions

You are advised to keep the treated area, and indeed your skin in general under surveillance. A person who has previously had a skin lesion of this type is more at risk of developing new lesions. Also, regardless of the treatment used up to 10% of all treated lesions recur.

- Check your skin regularly and look for any changes i.e. moles changing and unhealed sores.
- Scan your skin, look for new/changing skin, moles and unhealed sores.
- Some skin cancers can appear as red, scaling lumpy sores.
- Use suitable sun protection: hats, clothing, avoid midday hours and always apply a high factor sun block.